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SCALE
Strengthening Capacity in Agriculture
Livelihoods and Environment



AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS: LESSONS FROM NEPAL

November 2019



Learning Document Process Overview

The SCALE team led focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with Sabal team members, participants, and government officials in Kathmandu, Sindhuli, and Kavre over a six-day period in June 2019 to determine the strengths and challenges of the activity's alternative livelihoods work. SCALE worked with Malini Tolat, Save the Children's Regional Livelihoods Advisor and Toyanath Pandey, Sabal's Senior Advisor, Financial Services, throughout the development of this learning document.

About SCALE

SCALE (Strengthening Capacity in Agriculture, Livelihoods, and Environment) is an initiative funded by USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and implemented by Mercy Corps in collaboration with Save the Children. SCALE aims to enhance the impact, sustainability and scalability of FFP-funded agriculture, natural resource management, and alternative livelihood activities in emergency and development contexts.

About Sabal

From 2014 to 2020, Save the Children and partners implemented the Sustainable Actions for Resilience and Food Security (Sabal) activity to improve resilience and food security of targeted populations in eleven districts of central and eastern Nepal. Throughout the immediate response and long road to recovery following the 2015 earthquake, Sabal has provided integrated support to strengthen local governance, market-responsive alternative livelihoods, financial services, and social capital. At the end of the activity, Sabal had reached close to 168,000 households.

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Contact Information

Save the Children
899 North Capitol St NE, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20002
www.fsnnetwork.org/SCALE

Mercy Corps
45 SW Ankeny St
Portland, OR 97204
scale@mercycorps.org

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This document was prepared by SCALE, in close collaboration with Save the Children





INTRODUCTION

The craggy roads of Central Nepal twist and turn to reveal lush, rolling hills and a multitude of green hues as far as the eye can see. Based on appearances alone, the landscape tells a story about a vibrant agricultural sector where farming is king, bringing endless potential.

However, Nepal's agricultural story is still unfolding. Despite great promise in the sector, the country is currently home to more than 4.6 million food insecure people with 36% of children under age five suffering from stunting.¹ Although 66% of the population engages directly in farming, the challenges in this sector are numerous.² Particularly for rural communities, land ownership, transportation challenges, poor irrigation, negative perceptions of work in agriculture, and myriad other factors continue to thwart the sector. Additionally, shocks and natural disasters such as earthquakes and landslides loom over vulnerable communities. Due to these complex factors, Nepalis are seeking alternative livelihoods and diverse sources of income, in addition to and in place of farming.

Over the last five years, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) has invested in Nepal to improve food security and assist vulnerable communities to prepare for and respond to shocks and natural disasters. FFP is currently funding Sabal (*Sustainable Action for Resilience and Food Security*), a five-year, \$37 million development food security activity that works in nine districts of Nepal's Central and Eastern regions to improve food security and nutrition outcomes at the individual, household, and community levels. Led by Save the Children, Sabal is a consortium of 24 organizations that includes lead livelihoods partner Development Project Service Centre (DEPROSC), as well as local strategic partners Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), Alliance Nepal, National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), and others. Operating from October 2014 through February 2020, Sabal is an integrated initiative with cross-sectoral interventions including three primary Purposes: 1) Livelihoods, 2) Health and Nutrition, and 3) Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/Governance. Sabal's approach to strengthening increased access to and availability of food includes both traditional agriculture production and income support and an integrated alternative livelihoods component. The livelihoods component includes the following core, mutually supporting sub-purposes (SP): *strengthened livelihoods of communities including marginalized and vulnerable women and men (SP 1.1)* and *improved economic risk management capacity of especially vulnerable men and women (SP 1.2)*.

SABAL & AN EVOLVING CONTEXT FOR ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS

Pre-Earthquake

In late 2014, Sabal began implementation in six districts. At the time of start-up, more than 70% of the economically active population engaged in the informal economy, one that was rapidly evolving due to changing patterns of employment at the local, regional, and international levels. However, households in rural areas faced complex challenges due to a dearth of local opportunities and the lack of skills and knowledge related to sectors outside of agriculture. Specifically, young people and women were facing extreme barriers

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- 1 World Food Programme Nepal Country Brief, WFP, June 2019. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000106858/download>
 - 2 FAO in Nepal: Nepal at a Glance. FAO, June 2019. <http://www.fao.org/nepal/fao-in-nepal/nepal-at-a-glance/en/>



in accessing the labor market due to limited technical skills, lack of social capital, poor economic conditions, family and household responsibilities, and cultural and social norms among other factors.

To address the evolving context, the Sabal team conceptualized its alternative livelihoods activities while examining the issues of unemployment, underemployment, and youth labor migration, especially for households with limited land for agriculture. Sabal was designed to facilitate vocational training in various demand-driven trades, provide training on enterprise development, and improve opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship, all contributing to economic diversification and the growth of alternative sectors in rural economies. By involving community members and key public and private stakeholders in the activity design and implementation, Sabal engaged them in laying the foundation for improved resilience and long-term self-reliance.

Adapting Priorities Post-Earthquake

Just a few months into activity start-up and implementation, at 11:56am on April 25, 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal killing over 9,000 people, injuring over 22,000, and decimating the homes and lives of tens of thousands. The country was catapulted into a state of chaos and instability, especially as aftershocks, avalanches, landslides, and another earthquake ensued in the following months.

After the earthquake, Sabal quickly worked with FFP to pivot its activities to respond to the immediate needs of communities and to extend implementation into the five most devastated districts of Nepal. The earthquake and its aftershocks damaged and destroyed nearly 802,500 houses, according to the Government of Nepal (GoN).³ Sabal's alternative livelihoods activities were repurposed to respond to both the local labor market needs and the rehabilitation priorities for communities. Sabal leadership and technical teams revisited the original activity design and adapted it to the new reality of the activity's participants.

Sabal's initial Theory of Change included alternative livelihoods as an important pathway, given the extensive dependence on migration as a coping mechanism by rural households in Nepal. Throughout the immediate response and long road to recovery from the earthquake, the relevance of the alternative livelihoods strategy was deepened despite the significantly changed operating context. Sabal merely shifted its efforts from facilitating safe migration to developing a skilled workforce that could rebuild infrastructure for communities' immediate recovery and to help them withstand future shocks.

UNPACKING SABAL'S ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY & APPROACH

Understanding Market Dynamics

In April 2016, Sabal kicked off post-earthquake alternative livelihoods work by engaging a local partner, Alliance Nepal, to conduct a comprehensive labor market assessment to determine the needs of the local economy. In addition to the destruction of homes, the 2015 earthquakes destroyed hundreds of public and private health facilities and administrative structures. The high levels of damage created a huge demand for quality construction, with donors pledging hundreds of millions of dollars to support rebuilding activities over the following five years. With funding being offered in the context of a severe labor shortage, there

3 *Nepal Earthquake – Fact Sheet #20*. USAID, June 2015. <https://www.usaid.gov/nepal-earthquake/fy15/fs20>



was a high demand for skilled craftsmen and technical support to rebuild houses and public facilities safer against future earthquakes. It was estimated that over 60,000 trained masons and numerous associated tradespeople would be needed to meet labor demands, in addition to changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices to ensure more earthquake-resistant construction.

In response to labor market assessment findings, Sabal partnered with Nepal's National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to address the immediate skilled labor shortage, recognizing that these employment opportunities would offer longer-term productive livelihood pathways while simultaneously rebuilding communities. Sabal also initiated a pilot vocational training and technology center program for one cluster of three districts. The centers and their mobile teams consisted of trainers with marketable skills, such as masonry, design, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical fitting as well as in-depth knowledge of building modalities based on seismic integrity factors.

Based on information from the assessment, the team developed alternative livelihoods programming around two major pathways: 1) employment and self-employment via vocational training and 2) entrepreneurship development and management. Each component was designed to provide viable alternatives to on-farm work in agriculture specific to each activity location and responsive to post-earthquake communities. The results of the market assessment heavily influenced the vocational course offerings, as only ten standard courses were available in these geographies prior to Sabal. All market-based programming must be designed to meet the current needs of a local economy. Sabal hired a local firm knowing they would have the strongest understanding of the complexities of the Nepali labor markets. In addition to the formative market assessment, the technical partners continued to explore context-specific opportunities during implementation to ensure relevance and linkages to local employers.

WHY USE A MARKET-BASED APPROACH?

Market-led programming is nothing new to the international development world. Using a market-based approach to achieve sustainable impact is no longer an innovative programmatic trend but rather a proven, tested approach.

However, while these principles are not new, the FFP and larger food security community is still grappling with implementation of market-based approaches. According to a June 2019 SCALE survey shared with the global food security and livelihoods communities, ensuring market-based approaches is the number one priority area in need of technical support and guidance for those focused on alternative livelihoods.⁴ Implementers and practitioners shared that challenges with market-based programming include insufficient market assessments, true facilitation approaches, scaling-up, identifying viable alternative livelihoods opportunities, designing exit strategies, and reaching the most vulnerable populations. Despite these challenges, the community as a whole remains resolute that market-based approaches are imperative for longer-term, sustainable impact.

It is important to note that it would be extremely difficult for a FFP-funded development food security activity (DFSA) to be a pure market systems development-based initiative due to monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, and design restrictions. However, Sabal and other initiatives employ market-based approaches when appropriate and feasible.

⁴ *Alternative Livelihoods Survey Results*. SCALE, November 2019. www.fsnnetwork.org/alternative-livelihoods-survey-results

Targeting

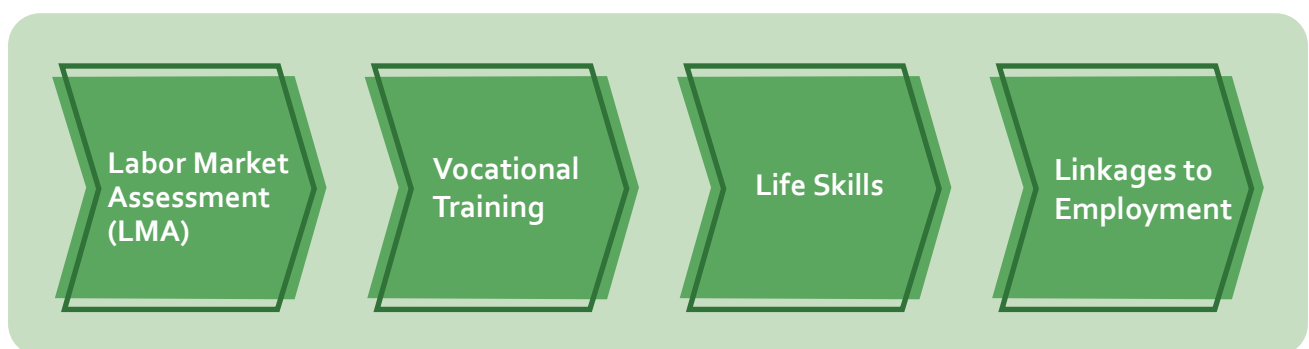
Of all families targeted by Sabal, 80% fall into the ‘most vulnerable’ category, meaning households that lack adequate access to food 12 months out of the year; have poor access to healthcare; and have difficulty responding to shocks.⁵ Post-earthquake, this targeting was adjusted for recovery-oriented programming to include a broader definition of households that were significantly affected and/or made vulnerable as a result of the event. Sabal’s alternative livelihoods strategy retained a strong market-led approach through the targeting adaptations. The team worked to fully understand the current and evolving market demands and identify employment and entrepreneurship pathways for beneficiaries by providing a combination of soft and technical skills training, market awareness, and linkages to employers to enable robust, sustainable outcomes. These interventions were targeted towards marginalized groups including youth, women, and extremely poor and/or socially excluded households.

Based on findings from the labor market assessment, activity area demographics, and discussions with private sector and government partners, Sabal developed specific targeting for each alternative livelihoods pathway:

- **Pathway 1:** Vocational skills, employment, and self-employment
 - Sabal targeted youth using the national definition of individuals 18-40. Based on their aptitude, young people were selected from targeted farming households by social mobilizers in consultation with partner vocational training service provider (TSP). Up to 20 percent of youth were selected from households that were not directly involved in Sabal’s farmers’ group activities so that Sabal could have a wider reach within the communities.
- **Pathway 2:** Enterprise and management
 - Sabal targeted youth and women for entrepreneurship activities. Young people were selected for this pathway by social mobilizers at the same time as youth for vocational training and employment activities. For women, priority was given to selected women from the most vulnerable households and those motivated to participate in enterprise development.

The details of activities conducted under each of these pathways are described below.

PATHWAY 1: VOCATIONAL SKILLS, EMPLOYMENT, AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT



Sabal’s alternative livelihoods pathway for employment and self-employment was exclusively non-farm based. The vision for this initiative was to strengthen diverse sectors within the activity’s implementation areas, thus providing incoming generating opportunities outside of traditional agricultural value chains.

⁵ Sabal Midterm Evaluation Report. TANGO International, Inc., September 2017. <http://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/Sabal-Mid-Term.pdf>



Demand-Driven Vocational Training

Building on the assessment results, Sabal worked with three well-respected and extensively vetted local TSPs to deliver demand-driven vocational training. With an eye towards sustainability, all vocational training was provided through accredited trainers and partners and certified by the government. The training courses offered covered more than 20 non-farm sectors, from mobile phone repair to furniture making to computer operator work. To address post-earthquake needs, Sabal also coordinated with the NRA to train 4,464 community members on identified safe construction skills that included four trades: masonry, carpentry, electricity, and plumbing. The vocational training courses typically lasted for 52 days, with students temporarily moving to residences near the training facility to focus on their studies and limit movement to and from their villages into urban centers. The 390 hours of coursework included 312 hours of on-the-job training to ensure that students learned practical applications of all skills being developed. When possible, students were encouraged to participate in the national skill test assessment, *Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training* (CTEVT), for further certification.

Building Life Skills

Integrated with the technical skills building, Sabal's life skills offerings included foundational employability skills as well as occupational health and safety, financial literacy, information on safe migration, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), nutritionally sensitive household budgeting and planning and environmental compliance. This integration of transferable skills ensured that participants strengthened soft skills that are critical not only for the workplace but also imperative for navigating everyday household, social, and economic situations.



Dhan Bdr. BK, age 28
BK MOTORBIKE REPAIR

Several years ago, Dhan traveled to Kathmandu from his village in Marin Municipality to get training on solar panel installation. However, upon returning home, he soon realized that the demand for solar energy was not as high as he had anticipated. The devastating earthquake of 2015 also made him question his economic aspirations, as his family's house was completely destroyed. When some friends shared information about Sabal's vocational training offerings, he decided to take a course on motorbike repair because he noticed that the number of vehicles in his community was increasing every day. Soon after graduation, Dhan returned to his village to start his own motorbike repair shop. Business is so good that he has hired two youth from the community

as his employees. After paying his staff, he earns 20,000 – 30,000 NPR (\$174 - \$262 USD) per month. His new business has enabled him to send two of his three children to boarding school, buy milk for his infant son, and support his parents with their work in agriculture.



Linkages to Employment

TSPs, Sabal staff and government partners facilitated links to local employers after course completion via connections made during the market assessment and other forms of private sector engagement. Furthermore, Sabal staff ensured that vocational training students had access to the results of the initial labor market assessment so they could understand local labor market trends and make connections to the private sector. For the safe construction students, Sabal worked with the NRA to ensure quality assurance of newly reconstructed homes and buildings. These linkages ensured that the activity veered away from 'training for training's sake' but instead participants were immediately linked to real income opportunities.

This combination of demand-driven training, coupled with strengthened life skills, plus employment linkages, enabled more than 60% of Sabal's vocational training participants to secure full-time and part-time employment within 3 months of training. Sabal defines full-time employment as a person working at least 40 hours in the reference period (during the last seven days of enumeration day), and individuals working at least one hour but less than 40 hours in the reference period as part-time employees.

Key Successes

Vocational Skills, Employment, and Self-Employment

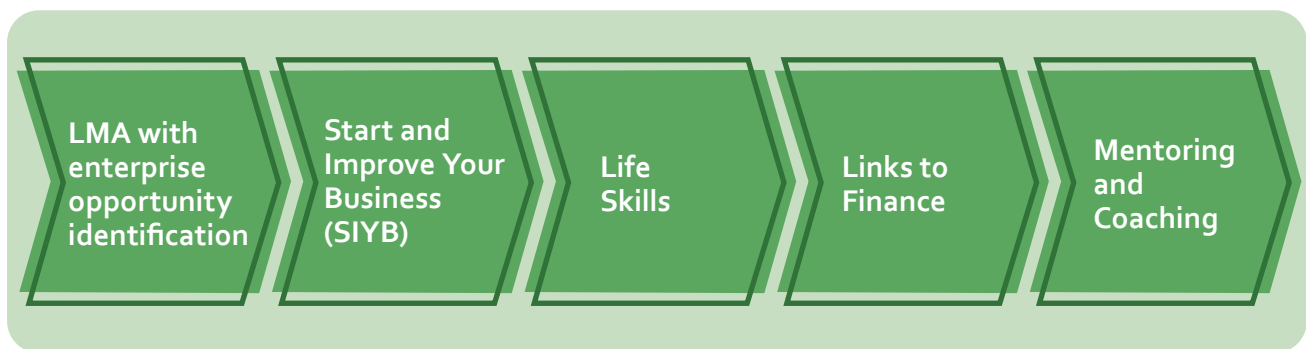
- **Vocational training as a direct response to earthquake reconstruction:** As an immediate response to the earthquake, Sabal facilitated safe construction training so that participants could learn in-demand skills while rebuilding their communities. In coordination with Nepal's NRA, Sabal trained individuals in masonry, ensuring specific techniques to build strong, durable earthquake-resistant homes. By partnering with the government, Sabal assured quality skills training and expert masons who are helping to protect communities from future devastation should another such earthquake or disaster occur. The initiative engaged 4,464 students in safe construction skills building, with 64% percent employed within three months of graduating. Additionally, 1701 of the safe construction students appeared in the CTEVT examinations with 87% graduating.
- **Certified, high quality training:** Forty two percent of vocational training graduates participated in the CTEVT skill test assessment, with 82% of participants appearing in the exam gaining graduation certificates.⁶ The quality of the Sabal-facilitated training was so thorough that several graduates are now being asked to be course instructors in their specified fields. Many Sabal vocational training graduates have reported that, in addition to income they earn from their new employment, they earn additional income as course instructors. Using respected curricula, TSPs, and accreditation processes enabled quality trainings and ensured that skills developed were well received by the private sector.
- **Breaking gender barriers:** While Nepal has made significant strides in addressing gender inequality, a stark disparity continues to exist. For example, male and female literacy rates stand at 71.6% and 44.5% respectively, highlighting a gaping difference in educational opportunities for men and women.⁷ For these reasons, Sabal's design included an intentional gender equity and social inclusion approach. Determined to challenge stereotypes, Sabal's vocational training courses engaged men and woman across a diverse set of sectors and industries. For example, the activity engaged not only 3,662 men in masonry, a traditionally male-dominated trade, but also 948 females. Defying gender norms, women also graduated as plumbers, electricians, and carpenters, typically male-dominated fields.

6 The number of students appearing in the CTEVT courses is not higher largely due to the fact that CTEVT does not offer certification in all of the Sabal offered courses including computer operations, bamboo furniture making, etc.

7 *The long road to gender equality in Nepal*. World Bank Blogs, March 2017. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/long-road-gender-equality-nepal>



PATHWAY 2: ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT



The employment and self-employment track included a combination of life skills and demand-driven vocational training alongside placement services. Recognizing the need to boost the private sector and youth and women's entrepreneurship in the target communities, Sabal focused on developing and nurturing microenterprises that matched the aspirations of the participants while also meeting market demands. The entrepreneurship component and sector focus was developed from results of the activity's market assessment in addition to value chain assessments, with a focus on identifying viable opportunities for microenterprise. The entrepreneurship support focused on a mix of off-farm and non-farm opportunities and included sector-specific business training, life skills, access to finance and mentoring and coaching from the local private sector. The Sabal activity marked the first time Save the Children included both employment and entrepreneurship support in non-farm sectors in a FFP-funded development initiative with the aim of creating real opportunities for alternative livelihood income generation.

Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)

Sabal focused on entrepreneurship support so that participants could play active roles in growing diverse, vibrant enterprises across multiple sectors in their local communities. The Sabal team adapted the International Labour Organization's flagship global business management training curriculum, *Start & Improve Your Business* (SIYB), to the Nepali context. SIYB courses ranged from intensive 7-day trainings to three weeks depending on the sector and covered a range of topics like business plan development, financial planning, and marketing techniques. Sabal participants examined a wide array of local business opportunities from dairy farming to tomato production. As a deliverable from the training, students developed strategic business plans in their identified sector. SIYB courses were led by Master Trainer trained by Sabal or Enterprise Development Facilitators (EDF) certified by the CTEVT.

Sabal's Alternative Livelihoods Snapshot

- **10,263 participants** engaged in over 20 different categories of employment/self-employment.
- **5,559 unemployed youth** received entrepreneurship, job readiness skills, and vocational training with 60% employed within 3 months.
- **4,704 entrepreneurs** from very vulnerable households received training and 2,109 (45%) successfully started their enterprise.



Building Life Skills

Similar to pathway 1, entrepreneurship students were also trained in critical life skills. Life skills courses for entrepreneurship participants included business-specific topics as well as sessions on coping with associated risks and shocks and stresses.

Links to Finance

Access to finance is one of the most challenging barriers to aspiring entrepreneurs in Nepal as identified through the market assessment and Sabal's design phase analysis. Therefore, Sabal facilitated linkages between trained entrepreneurship participants and microfinance institutions (MFIs) for start-up loans. Additionally, SIYB graduates with business plans had access to loans via local district cooperatives. Sabal's financial services technical specialists facilitated meetings between SIYB participants and the cooperatives and assisted the entrepreneurs with their loan request proposals. Successful loan proposals were subsidized by the government with 5% charged to SIYB borrowers. SIYB participants were also linked to and accessed funds from with the GoN's Youth Self-Employment Fund (YSEF) at the local level.

Sabal participants' average start-up loan was 10,413 NPR/ \$91.48 USD.

Ongoing Coaching and Mentoring

Recognizing that starting, maintaining, and growing a business can be extremely challenging, Sabal facilitated ongoing home visits, coaching, and mentoring from staff, service providers, government actors, and others. On an ongoing basis, the district level Employment and Enterprise Coordinators at the Rural Municipality Offices also provide support based on individual entrepreneurs needs and demands and will continue to do so for sustainability purposes.

Among 4,704 SIYB participants, 52% (2,432) finalized their business plans, with 87% of those with business plans continuing on to establish an enterprise (Male 22%, Female 78%) across diverse sectors including hotels, milk delivery services, motorcycle repair, and restaurants. More than 97% of those who have established an enterprise have started earning income.

Key Successes

Enterprise Development and Management

- **Using a tested model, adapted to the local context:** Sabal adapted the ILO's globally championed SIYB curriculum to the Nepali context. This approach demonstrates that there is no need to 'reinvent the wheel' with regards to training materials as so often happens in development programs; rather, the team took an existing, proven approach and spent time tailoring it to the local context. According to the ILO, the SIYB course has trained 15 million people and has resulted in the start-up of at least 2.65 million new businesses.⁸ Due to success in Nepal, Save the Children is now using and adapting the SIYB materials for other programs and contexts.
- **Championing female entrepreneurs:** Similarly to the vocational training approach, Sabal focused SIYB efforts on empowering women. Of the 4,704 SIYB participants, 77% are female although some of this representation may be due to male migration in Sabal's activity areas. However, despite the heavy engagement with women and great successes from this cohort, the average annual income for female-owned enterprises is still higher for males (67,237 NPR/ \$587 USD) than

⁸ *Start and Improve Your Business*. ILO, 2017. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_560493/lang-en/index.htm



for females (57,338 NPR/ \$500 USD). Some women attribute this to the fact that they generally have more domestic responsibilities that take them away from focusing on their businesses. Additionally, some female business owners mentioned that the location of their business was a challenge as it needed to be close to the family's homesteads, which often are not near market areas or in lucrative parts of town.

- Coordination with the government and linkages to key stakeholders:** All solid market-based programming must coordinate with local actors, particularly government institutions, for sustainability purposes. Sabal coordinated with the GoN's Ministry of Agriculture Development, Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, and the NRA and is now working with the newly appointed Employment Coordinators in each Rural Municipality Office. The Sabal team routinely coordinates with the municipality offices and Employment Coordinators to share information on promising sectors, removing barriers to entrepreneurship, job opportunities, and successes in private sector strengthening. The Employment Coordinators emphasized that Sabal's work in strengthening female entrepreneurs in the communities is essential, as women typically do not have the same educational and economic opportunities as their male counterparts. The Employment Coordinator in Marin Municipality stressed that engaging women is critical for the development of Nepal, as many men in rural areas have migrated to neighboring countries.

WHY ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS? ADDRESSING THE SHIFTING ASPIRATIONS OF NEPAL'S YOUTH



In Marin Municipality, Rajendra Majhi, age 26, used to help his father produce rice, wheat, and maize on the family's plot of land. Their yields were sufficient for their family's needs but there was no surplus for selling. After completing Sabal's vocational training course in plumbing, Rajendra now earns up to 2000 NPR (\$17 USD) per day through his plumbing business and does not have a strong desire to return to farming. His father expressed sadness over his son's lack of interest in agriculture but understands why Rajendra wants to pursue a different career path. In discussions with participants, parents, and government actors, many expressed that young Nepalis have a wide array of professional aspirations that extend beyond traditional agriculture, despite years of generational experience in the sector. The world of work is constantly evolving and so are the desires and motivations of young people. Thus, Sabal's work in engaging young people in off-farm and non-farm livelihoods is critical in ensuring youth have viable, local income opportunities that contribute to household and family needs.



LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAMMING

Sabal's livelihoods activities have provided integrated support to strengthen local governance, market-responsive livelihoods, financial services, and social capital. However, while Sabal had successes in alternative livelihoods programming, there were also several challenges and opportunities for course correction. While the Food for Peace community benefits from documentation around 'what works,' it is also imperative to highlight lessons learned so that implementers can increase effectiveness and efficiency through each other's experiences, as well as understand recommendations for future activities.

Lesson Learned: Youth

In all activity documents, Sabal highlights youth and women as key participants for livelihoods activities. However, Sabal uses GoN's definition of youth which includes individuals from ages 18 to age 40. This range is far too wide, as male and female 18-year-olds often have very different needs, decision-making authority, mobility, and access to resources than 39-year-olds. Understanding the inherent diversity within any given youth cohort is critical and ensures that the 'assumption trap' of what young people need is avoided. The lack of further segmentation within Sabal's programmatic youth definition and accompanying tailored interventions led to some challenges while implementing the vocational training courses. Many parents, especially of young women, felt uncomfortable sending family members in their late teens and early 20s to the city center for the duration of the 52-day training. While Sabal adapted the delivery mechanism to meet their needs by moving some trainings to the local level, activity staff feel that the quality of these trainings was compromised. If Sabal had conducted a more comprehensive youth analysis and subsequently segmented some of their participants by gender and age, staff may have been able to examine the unique barriers that each cohort faces and designed appropriately.

Recommendation: Design for youth, tailor activities for youth ages 15-24

All Food for Peace programming should adhere to the USAID definition of youth which includes individuals 15-24 years of age.⁹ This definition is aligned with the United Nations' classification of youth and is the recognized standard from the international youth development community. When activities examine the unique needs and barriers for this cohort in any given community, the interventions are likely to be more nuanced and thus more effective. A comprehensive youth analysis and subsequent age and gender segmentation aligns with industry best practices and may assist in avoiding challenges such as vocational training location and mobility concerns for young women, etc.

Lesson Learned: Implementing in rural areas

Due to concerns and issues around safety, transportation, and commuting into urban areas for vocational training, Sabal adapted their activities to include training at the local level within beneficiaries' communities. Although this move demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness to meeting participants' needs, Sabal staff and students alike believed that the quality of training in the rural areas was not of the same technical excellence as the courses being offered in the original locations.

⁹ *Youth in Development Policy*. USAID, 2012.

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_o.pdf



Ranjana Thapa, age 35

After Ranjana's seven day SIYB training through Sabal, she excitedly called her husband who had migrated to Saudi Arabia for work four years prior. He had been working in the milk business for a dairy farmer and Ranjana was now convinced that they could start their own milk business in their village in Marin Municipality. She had noticed that the local agricultural college had

a high demand for milk and milk products. Through her SIYB training, she learned how to prepare a business plan and estimate business expenses. Ranjana's husband returned to Nepal in 2018 to join his wife in their buffalo farm and milk business. They currently have 14 buffalos and are planning for a total of 100 animals. The couple's business produced 70 liters of milk per day, which all goes immediately to the market for 70 NPR (\$0.61 USD) per liter. As the demand for their milk, yogurt, and other products increases, the couple is planning to employ ten additional people.

Recommendation: Analysis of participant populations, unique barriers, and geographic constraints alongside designed interventions

During an activity's design phase, teams should analyze potential interventions and implementation processes against the constraints of each targeted participant population. If mobility, safety concerns, and transportation present significant barriers for a specific segment of the population to engage in activities, teams may decide to develop strategies for commuting, high-quality mobile training, or others.

Lesson Learned: Migration

Migration and remittances play enormous roles in Nepal's economy. 'Remittances are keeping Nepal alive,' says a former Sabal employee who now works for the Chamber of Commerce in Kathmandu. His statement seems feasible given that remittances are 28% of Nepal's current GDP.¹⁰ A large part of this migration is due to limited availability and poor perceptions of local economic opportunities, especially among young people. Sabal's integrated approach carefully examined when migration manifests as a stressor rather than a positive livelihood change. However, the constant migration flows, particularly for young people, throughout the duration of the activity presented some issues for precise monitoring and evaluation of alternative livelihood activities.

Recommendation: Rigorous, ongoing analysis on migration patterns

How communities perceive and cope with migration depends largely on cultural norms, the political economy, and the role remittances play within a given economy, among many other complex factors. In Nepal, migration has benefitted migrant households economically in aggregate but the costs and benefits of migration vary by caste/ethnicity, class, and region.¹¹ Each Food for Peace context is unique, particularly

¹⁰ Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Nepal. World Bank, July 2019. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=NP>

¹¹ Labour Migration and the Remittance Economy The Socio-Political Impact, The Asia Foundation, March 2017. <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Labour-Migration-and-the-Remittance-Economy.pdf>



when it comes to migration, its impact on food systems, push/pull factors, and the potential for alternative livelihoods. The food security community could greatly benefit from tools and resources that enable proposal teams and implementers to understand the role of migration and remittances during the design phase of an initiative.

Lessons Learned: Defining alternative livelihoods

In activity design, monitoring, and evaluation, Sabal did not consistently differentiate between off-farm and non-farm livelihoods activities. While this is not atypical for larger FFP-funded DFSAs, creating a distinction between the two forms of alternative livelihoods can clarify budgeting processes, enhance monitoring and evaluation, and enable implementers to understand 'what works' in strengthening income streams. *Off-farm* income encompasses all agriculture-related income opportunities beyond the farm. From the value chain lens, off-farm income includes the 'middle' and 'end' of the value chain as agricultural goods leave the farm to ultimately reach the consumer. Examples of off-farm income and enterprise include extension services, processing, packaging, storage, and transportation. *Non-farm* income and related private sector actors exist outside of agricultural market systems, unlike on-farm and off-farm income. Non-farm sectors include construction, health care, hospitality, education, mining, tourism, etc.

Recommendation: Differentiate between off-farm and non-farm activities

The world of work is rapidly changing; how we classify and support different forms of work is essential, for measurement purposes and a variety of other reasons. SCALE, in collaboration with FFP, developed a glossary of definitions for on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm income to help implementers be more precise around alternative livelihood interventions, including mixed livelihoods.¹² DFSA initiatives should design and monitor around these definitions so the larger FFP community can begin to grow a body of evidence around the different forms of alternative livelihoods, as well as document successes in these categories.

Lesson Learned: Monitoring and evaluation

Sabal monitored employment status of individuals until 3 months after vocational training graduation but was unable to continue tracking progress due to budget limitations. Due to this short timeline, it is hard to determine the longevity of the employment and entrepreneurship outcomes, as well as determine impact.

Recommendation: Long-term monitoring and evaluation of alternative livelihoods outcomes

In order to determine the sustained impact of the trainings, and also understand local employment trends, seasonality of labor, longevity of jobs, and more, activities should ideally monitor job placements at three month, six month, nine month, and one year intervals if activity duration allows. Long-term monitoring will help implementers understand the bigger picture of employment outcomes, adapt interventions if necessary, and tell a story about the larger impact.

Lesson Learned: Budgeting

For Sabal, the cost of the vocational training and SIYB interventions was a significant portion of the overall activity budget and limited the ability to scale to the potential demand. For example, Sabal covered all training, lodging, and meals for vocational training participants for the 52-day courses. Due to the

¹² *Alternative Livelihoods Working Glossary*. SCALE, 2018. <https://www.fsnnetwork.org/alternative-livelihoods-working-glossary>



considerable resources required for these activities, Sabal was limited in reaching additional participants and beneficiary groups.

Recommendation: Developing appropriate tools and analysis to budget appropriately for alternative livelihoods

Intentional, adaptive, market-based approaches to alternative livelihoods must be adequately allocated for in the budget during the design phase. As these activities veer from traditional food security interventions and often call for robust training, private sector engagement, etc. Interventions such as high-quality vocational training and business development support can be quite expensive. The FFP community should consider recommending a suite of cost-benefit analysis and/or cost effectiveness analysis tools to determine-how off-farm and non-farm interventions fit within larger food security initiative budgets and designs.



Nirmala, age 22

NIRMALA'S BEAUTY SALON

When Nirmala's father learned about a vocational training program in the city center of Sindhuli, he initially felt uncomfortable about sending his daughter there on her own for the 52-day training. However, after some convincing, Nirmala embarked on an educational journey to become a beautician through Sabal's support. Upon graduation, she studied for and passed her CTVET exam and decided to return to her home village and start her own business, Nirmala's Beauty Salon. Soon after setting up her shop, she was contracted by a Government of Nepal initiative to train five apprentices. For her work in training this next generation of workers, she is paid 11,000 NPR (\$95 USD) per month per trainee. Nirmala's customers travel far and wide for her services; she earns up to 30,000 NPR (\$262 USD) per month in busy seasons

and is already planning to expand her business. Her father, a subsistence farmer whose home was destroyed by the 2015 earthquake, is incredibly thankful he supported Nirmala in the training. The income from her salon helps their family of five to meet their basic needs as well as plan for the future.



Visit our website: www.fsnnetwork.org/scale

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